



## Welcome



Welcome to our first admissions newsletter, designed to update you on news, views and research on admissions assessments, and provide timely information on the admissions cycle.

This edition leads with an issue that is at the forefront of many of your minds: the tutoring effect. Tutoring and the 11+ always generate headlines – some balanced, some less so, as illustrated by the BBC's decision to remove its recent 'Tutor Proof' programme from iPlayer as it 'fell short in terms of range of opinion and accuracy'. We thought we'd use this opportunity to explore some of these issues with you.

You can also read about a research project on vision impairment we have conducted with the RNIB and a free Q&A document you can share with parents, based on your most commonly asked questions. And, last but not least, we would also like to introduce you to the GL Assessment admissions team.

We hope you enjoy the read. If you would like to speak to us about the tutoring issue, or indeed, anything else highlighted in the newsletter, please do get in touch.

**Greg Watson,**  
*Chief Executive, GL Assessment*

## The tutoring effect

Understandably, emotions always run high when it comes to the 11+. Parents want to give their children the best start they can and many employ tutors who claim that they can help. Inevitably, this leads to a debate about the fairness of the system.

So, just how fair are the tests currently? And can coaching actually have an impact?

### Achieving fairness

In the context of admissions tests, 'fairness' means impartial testing; ensuring that one group has no advantage over another due to their ethnicity, gender or background.

It also means trialling the questions carefully – presenting the questions to hundreds of students selected according to their gender, age and ethnicity during test development. These students are also selected from schools which differ geographically, socio-economically and have varying levels of performance. The results are then analysed so that any questions that may bias one group more than another can be removed.

During our own test development, we have rejected around 2,000 questions in a quest to ensure our 11+ tests are as fair as possible to all groups. As the largest provider of these tests we have an unrivalled record in this area.

### Education not a factor

The school you went to can have a huge impact on how much you learn. Therefore, in the interests of balance, we believe that an entrance assessment should bear little resemblance to the national curriculum or other tests children take in school.

If this is not the case, it dilutes the validity of the test; the child from the outstanding primary school or the independent sector

would most likely have an advantage in a standard test of reading comprehension, for example, than say a child who attended a school in special measures.

Tests need to include, as far as possible, a test on 'pure' ability in order to assess a child's potential rather than 'what they know'. This ensures that a child is not discriminated against if they have had fewer opportunities to develop good reading skills and vocabulary, for example.

### A 'tutor proof' test?

We cannot escape the fact that coaching will exist for whatever type of entrance exam is in place.

To make our 11+ tests less susceptible to coaching, we follow recommendations from the National Foundation for Educational Research to vary questions to reduce any advantage to a minimum – whether perceived or real – candidates could gain through tutoring.

For clarity, we do not promote the tutoring of pupils for selection, although we do believe that pupils should practice test items and be familiar with the test format ahead of the examination to avoid unnecessary angst on the day.

However, as some parents will always employ a tutor, the debate around the subject is unlikely to go away any time soon. While we continue to ensure our tests are as fair as possible, politicians will debate about how education could help ensure disadvantaged children are more widely represented in the best schools in the country.





## Research with the RNIB



Given the importance of ensuring 11+ candidates with vision impairment have fair access to a grammar school place, we have conducted an important research project with the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB). The aim was to set out best practice for the production and administration of the 11+ for children with vision impairment, including some forms of dyslexia.

As part of the project, two sets of guidelines (for educational psychologists and for other users) have been produced and are available for you to download from [www.gl-assessment.co.uk/11plus](http://www.gl-assessment.co.uk/11plus). Alongside the guidelines, a case study demonstrates how this issue has been tackled head on by Kent County Council.

 If you would like to see all of our published research on a range of assessment topics, visit: [www.gl-assessment.co.uk/research](http://www.gl-assessment.co.uk/research).

## Meet the team

Our admissions team is highly trained and experienced in all aspects of academic selection, and consists of test commissioners, developers, statisticians and account managers.

Jaki Gorman is our Senior Customised Test Co-ordinator, responsible for ensuring we provide you with an excellent service from start to finish. As such, she's your first port of call.


If you would like to speak to Jaki or arrange an appointment to discuss any aspect of the assessment process, you can contact her at:

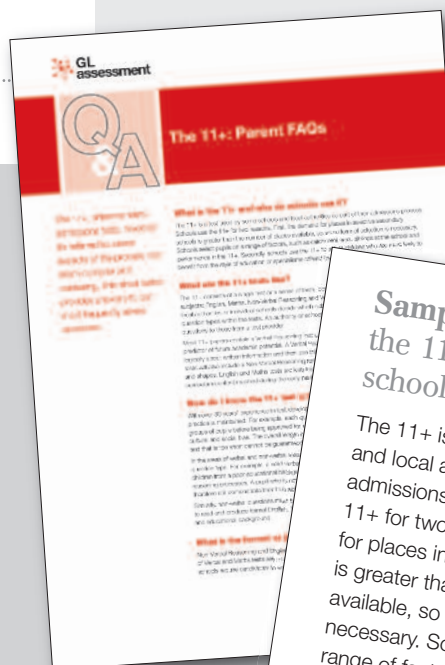
[jaki.gorman@gl-assessment.co.uk](mailto:jaki.gorman@gl-assessment.co.uk) or on **020 8996 8446**.

## Frequently asked questions

How do I know the 11+ test is fair?  
What are the tests like? What is a Standard Age Score?

We know you receive a lot of questions from parents about the 11+, so we've compiled a short Q&A document that might help you provide some of the answers. You are welcome to download and print the document from: [www.gl-assessment.co.uk/11plus](http://www.gl-assessment.co.uk/11plus) or even link to it from the admissions section of your own website.

 If you have any other questions you would like us to add to the list, simply email: [jaki.gorman@gl-assessment.co.uk](mailto:jaki.gorman@gl-assessment.co.uk)



**Sample question: What is the 11+ and why do schools use it?**

The 11+ is a test used by some schools and local authorities as part of their admissions process. Schools use the 11+ for two reasons. First, the demand for places in selective secondary schools is greater than the number of places available, so some form of selection is necessary. Schools select pupils on a range of factors, such as catchment area, siblings at the school and performance in the 11+. Secondly, schools use the 11+ to select children who are most likely to benefit from the style of education or specialism offered by the school.